

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Reconsideration is respectfully requested of the Official Action of May 5, 2004, relating to the above-identified application.

The requirement for restriction is noted and applicants confirm that they have elected Claims 1-8 for examination in this case. In order to advance prosecution and expedite favorable action, Claim 9 has been cancelled without prejudice to the filing of any divisional or continuing applications.

Applicants confirm that cancellation of the claim to the non-elected subject matter does not affect inventorship.

It is noted that applicants' claim for priority has been perfected by the filing of a certified copy of the prior foreign application.

It is further noted that the Information Disclosure Statement filed on November 14, 2003, has been acknowledged by the Examiner.

The new title is presented; namely, SPRAY DRYING PROCESS FOR PRODUCING ANHYDROUS ALKALI SULFIDE.

The minor informalities noted by the Examiner in paragraph 9, on page 4, of the Official Action have been attended to.

Claims 3 and 4 have been revised to address the claim objections set forth by the Examiner in paragraph 10, page 4, of the Official Action.

Claim 2 has also been amended in order to overcome the rejection of Claim 2 under 35 U.S.C. § 112.

The rejection of Claims 1 and 2 under 35 U.S.C. § 102, as anticipated by the international published application of *Abraham* (WO 01/25416), is traversed and reconsideration is respectfully requested. The *Abraham* patent shows a process which involves the spray drying of an aqueous composition containing an alkali metal sulfide and creating a series of inert gas streams wherein the first gas stream is heated to a temperature of 275°C to 500°C and the second inert gas stream contains the inert gas of the first inert gas stream, solid particulate anhydrous metal sulfide and water in the form of vapour or gas. See, pg. 9 of the WO 01/25416 document, beginning at line 15. A third inert gas stream may also be involved in the process of *Abraham*.

In contrast, applicants method involves only one stream that is the liquid substance preparation which contains the alkali sulfide, either in solution, suspension, dispersion or as a water crystallization melt, and which is sprayed into a chamber. The preparation is atomized in contact with a hot gas stream which consists of the inert drying gas loaded with water vapour. There is no multiplicity of inert drying gases as is involved with the *Abraham* process. Consequently, applicants respectfully submit that the *Abraham* reference does not anticipate Claims 1 and 2 and the rejection should be withdrawn.

The rejection of Claims 3-8, under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a), as unpatentable over the *Abraham* document, is traversed and reconsideration is respectfully requested. The claims in the case clearly show and set forth that applicants' process involves an atomization of the liquid substance preparation in a chamber in contact with the hot gas stream which consists of the inert drying gas loaded with the water vapour. There is no plurality of inert gas streams in applicants' process. The *Abraham* patent does not show a process coming within the scope or even similar to the claimed process which avoids the multiplicity of steps required in the *Abraham* process.

Note that *Abraham* teaches (pg. 8, lines 24, *et. seq.*) the need to dehydrate the atomized composition and, therefore, would not lead a person skilled in the art to add water vapour.

Applicants respectfully submit that the reference fails to motivate a person skilled in the art to change or modify the *Abraham* process in any way to thereby arrive at applicants' process.

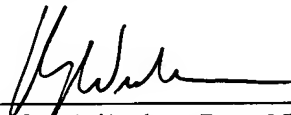
For similar reasons, it is submitted that the newly added claims also distinguish from the *Abraham* document and, therefore, new Claims 10 and 11 are also deemed to be patentable over the prior art.

With respect to the comments concerning the comparative data, applicants note that all tests use nitrogen as the atomizing gas. Comparative tests use nitrogen as the drying gas, while the examples of the invention use water vapour, which is present with the nitrogen of the atomizing gas, see Table 1, pg. 7.

In view thereof, favorable action at the Examiner's earliest convenience is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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